

We belong to the day - 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Opener: How labour pains thwarted the Easter Bunny...>>> Noel wasn't ready!

Context: 2nd sermon in this Advent series: the Day of the Lord. Last week, we looked at the passage just before this one in 1 Thess. A quick recap: Paul and his friends had set up the church in Thessalonica. Persecution hotted up, so Paul had to leave, but he stayed in touch; he knows what kind of questions they have.

The Thessalonians were apparently worried about Jesus return. Specifically, they were worried about two things: First – and we covered this last week, 'what will happen to those Christians who have already died when Js returns?' Will they miss out in some way?

And second, which we will look at today: 'What will happen to Christians who are still alive when Jesus returns?'

Why worry? Because frankly, a lot of the scriptures that deal with the day of the Lord are scary! OT prophets: the great and terrible day of the Lord, when people will be judged for the way they have treated God and God's enemies will be destroyed. Jesus talked about it in the same way! We don't know exactly what Paul has told them up until now, but the rest of the NT (apart from James) hasn't even been written by the time the Thessalonians received this letter.

So, what will the Day of the Lord be like for Christians who are still alive?

Part One: v1-3 – The Day of the Lord will come...unexpectedly

Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, ²for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

V1 Funny – I don't need to write to you (but I am anyway!)

Gives him a chance to remind them of what he has already taught them and set a context for what follows.

They already know: that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

If you knew when the thief was coming, you'd call the police in advance! Or you'd be behind the door with a rolling pin! Thieves can only succeed if you aren't expecting them.

Or if catching thieves isn't your style, there's always labour pains. From the time a doctor confirms a pregnancy, you know roughly when the baby is coming, but from a couple of weeks before to a couple of weeks after, it could happen any time! The waters might break or the contractions start, and it's on! That's why you have your bag all ready to go and you have a plan B and plan C of how to get to the hospital.

I've never had a thief break into my house, but I'm ready; I lock the doors at night and Heather sleeps with an AK-47 under her pillow.

Being robbed is traumatic. Labour pains are traumatic. I've seen it up close three times, and it's excruciating! AND the lousy hospital wouldn't even give me any pain relief...

they also have this in common: 1) they come suddenly, but you can still be prepared.

The day of the Lord is an unpleasant arrival for the enemies of God. It is the day of their destruction. "peace" and "safety" were buzzwords in the propaganda of the Roman empire – written on coins. But in the face of God's wrath, there is no peace and safety for his enemies! None of them shall escape. Do you feel the gravity of that? If it doesn't move us that so many people are on the wrong side of God's justice, what does that say about us?

But the Jesus' return is NOT a day of destruction for God's people. More on that in a minute...

Illustration: Bushfire evacuation. Stay if you are confident or leave early. Stick to your plan. Get it wrong and the result could be devastating...

Application: Are YOU ready??? Getting robbed because you left the house unlocked means you are a dill. Missing out on heaven because you refused to come to Jesus for protection in mercy means so much worse! Don't be like that on the Day of the Lord! We ALL need to be saved by Jesus. Are you sorted? Isn't it silly that it's illegal to drive a car without insurance, and yet so many people are driving through life with no assurance of heaven, because it only comes from Jesus, and they are not prepared to submit to him.

But if you have, then you are like the Thessalonians, you are sons and daughters of the day!

Part two: v4-7 – We belong to the day

⁴But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. ⁵You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. ⁶So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. ⁷For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.

Illustration:

Mum and Dad away >>Big Party at Our Place!

And then Mum and Dad came home unexpectedly.

Application:

We belong to God. We want to please him. We all fall into disobedience from time to time.

But who wants to be embarrassed when Jesus returns?

We belong to the day. Let's live as sons and daughters of light.

Everyone in the world falls into one of two categories:

They belong to darkness or to light

To night or to day.

To say that we are sons and daughters of the day does not mean we belong to the day of the Lord; it means we are on the side of daylight versus darkness.

Darkness is when bad things tend to happen because that's when people think they can get away with it.

When people think God doesn't know what is going on – either he doesn't know or doesn't care – they tend not to live godly lives!

Why do things God's way instead of My Way? If I can live for me and there are no repercussions, I win!

But Christians know better.

We know that God sees.

We know that God cares.

We know God will judge all of us.

And what's more, we want to live godly lives, because we care about what is right!

We want to live godly lives because we love God and want to please him!

We want to live godly lives because Jesus is Lord.

So we stay alert. We exercise self-control.

We don't just drift along and let our non-Christian society dictate our morals.

We belong to the day. Let's live as sons and daughters of light.

Part three: v8-11 – dress

for the Day: Be Son-safe

⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. ⁹For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁰He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

If we belong to the day, let's dress for the day.

How do we do that? First, by making an effort; be self-controlled.

I'm not saying that we should behave ourselves and if we are good enough boys and girls, we will be on the nice list and God will let us into heaven. Not at all. Everything good thing we have is from God: salvation and forgiveness; the faith required for us to take hold of those, all from God. Not by works, so that nobody can boast. It is the Holy Spirit who changes our hearts, convicting us of sin, pointing us to Jesus, and moving our hearts to want to please him. And yet, the Spirit calls us to partner with him in the renovation of our lives. Be self-controlled.

If we belong to the day, let's dress for the day. How?

Put on faith and love as a breastplate. Do you have faith? Do you believe that Jesus is the son of God? Do you believe that he lived/died/rose for you? Do you believe that he is coming back again? **It will show in the way that you live.**

Do you love Jesus? Does his sacrificial death for you make your heart well up with gratitude? Do you long to be with him in perfect friendship forever? **It will show in the way that you live.**

Faith in who Jesus and what he has done; love for the son of God who loved you first: let these be your breastplate. They will guard your heart against the devil who will try to lead you astray.

If we belong to the day, let's dress for the day. How?

Put on the hope of salvation as a helmet. What does that mean? Look at v9-10! [Read it out loud together]

Is that clear enough? You are not in God's bad books. He has chosen you. You will not be destroyed in the judgement. You will receive salvation.

Why? Because he loves you and wants you to be with him forever.

IF the Son of God is coming back to earth to judge the living and the dead, be Son-safe. But know this: he has already won the victory. You are safe!

Illustration: Our cats: Harley the Nervous vs Ziggy the Brave and Lewie the Affectionate. All as secure as one another, yet Harley is just learning to relax after 9 years and Ziggy is completely relaxed after one year.

Application: 1) Some Christians are like Nervous Harley. Does God really love me? What If Jesus comes back and catches me doing the wrong thing? But he wants us to be like the ragdolls, Ziggy and Lewie: totally at ease, knowing his unconditional love and favour. Relax! Jesus has won your salvation! You don't need to win it again!

2) Meditate on this. Ask God to help you take it in and to examine your life, any changes required?

3) v11 - ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.